

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) recognized the 145th anniversary of Juneteenth.

Nearly three years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 troops marched to Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, to inform enslaved men, women and children that they were free.

“The end of slavery did not mark the end of discrimination. Federal and state laws were soon enacted that excluded blacks and other people of color from equal rights for more than a century. However, Juneteenth is a defining moment in our nation’s history when this country took an important step in extending the promise of liberty to all Americans,” said Hastings.

“Almost a century and a half later, the descendants of slaves have occupied some of the most powerful positions in the world. However, jarring disparities in employment, health, and wealth persist in black communities across the nation. And, although over 140 years have passed since slavery was legally abolished in the U.S., millions of men, women and children are enslaved around the world, and tens of thousands of slaves are trafficked into this country each year,” continued Hastings.

“Thankfully, our country has taken steps to combat modern slavery and inequality domestically and internationally. The U.S. has followed other progressive nations by issuing a formal apology for its history of enslavement, and has committed to building a more equitable and just future for people living in the U.S. and abroad,” Hastings further noted.

“This past Wednesday, members of Congress unveiled commemorative plaques that honored the contributions that slaves made in building the U.S. Capitol, and our country as a whole. I commend my colleagues and other parties for spearheading this effort, and recognize it as a strong attempt for our nation to tell a more accurate and comprehensive version of our history.

“As we celebrate Juneteenth, Americans of all backgrounds must remember to continue the work of fighting the injustices that continue to deprive countless people of the basic rights and privileges that should be afforded to all individuals.”

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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